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New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Saliba (Malta): Let me say at the outset how pleased we are at the election of Ambassador Mernier to the chairmanship of this important Committee. His wide experience and knowledge will certainly encourage us to conclude our work successfully. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

As we take stock of the progress made in recent years on the items on our agenda, we can say that significant steps forward have been taken. Confidence and trust between two former adversaries have replaced the hostility and animosity that dominated global politics for nearly half a century. Their continuing efforts to foster cooperation in the realm of international and regional security, as reflected in their recent joint statement of principles, are most welcome. However, we join others in urgently calling on the Russian Federation to ratify the START II Treaty as soon as possible, in order to enable negotiations to begin and be concluded on a START III treaty.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are another two major steps forward towards the establishment of a solid and credible non-proliferation regime. The ratification of the CTBT by two nuclear-Power States sends a promising signal. We welcome their commitment to adhere to the provisions of that Treaty and urge other nuclear-weapon and nuclear-capable States to follow suit.

The consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the recent initiative to establish another nuclear-free zone in Central Asia are concrete and important strides in the promotion of the non-proliferation regime. We must continue to foster the confidence among nations that is necessary to enable such zones to be established in other regions, such as South Asia and the Middle East.

It is also encouraging that agreement was finally reached this year in the Conference on Disarmament on enabling negotiations to begin on a fissile materials cut-off treaty. The early conclusion of such a treaty would certainly add value to the non-proliferation regime and to the nuclear disarmament agenda. Equally encouraging was the establishment of an ad hoc committee to discuss negative security assurances. My country has always maintained that nuclear-weapon States must exhibit restraint not only vis-à-vis one another but also, and especially, vis-à-vis non-nuclear-weapon States. Such restraint must be coupled with security assurances, which we feel need to be further strengthened, including through an international legally binding instrument.

In sharp contrast to these assuring developments were the nuclear tests carried out recently by two non-signatories to the NPT and the CTBT. Such disturbing actions only fuel insecurity and mistrust and seriously hamper progress

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in the spheres of non-proliferation and disarmament. Like others, we of course welcome the declared intent of both India and Pakistan to adhere to the CTBT. However, we, like others, urge that such declarations of intent be matched by unconditional and concrete actions. We appeal to them to refrain from more nuclear tests and from development or deployment of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable missiles. We urge them strongly, as indeed we urge all countries that have not yet done so, to take the bold step of signing and ratifying the CTBT and the NPT as soon as possible.

In this context, we welcome the recent ratification of the NPT by Brazil. We remain unequivocal in our belief that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and that its feasibility can be guaranteed only by faithful compliance with all its provisions. We also note with interest the proposal aimed at creating a nuclear-weapon-free world, being put forward by a coalition of eight countries. This may well be a timely initiative, but its success depends on a solid, true and clear commitment by all to achieve this ultimate objective.

While more States are renouncing the development and use of chemical and biological weapons, the dangers of the clandestine development of these weapons are ever present. This is particularly so given that the technology for their acquisition and use is relatively easy to develop. We strongly appeal to States to refrain from developing such weapons of mass destruction and to destroy those that they already have.

Universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention must become a reality. As a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Malta intends to give its share to strengthen that Organization and to ensure the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also attach great importance to the reinforcement of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention through a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime.

The nuclear disarmament agenda must be kept on track even while we must accept the realization that non-proliferation cannot be taken for granted. Neither can we dismiss the spectre of nuclear terrorism. We strongly believe that nuclear export controls — in particular the control of dual-use materials and equipment — are an integral aspect of the non-proliferation regime. Having survived the threat of nuclear annihilation for nearly 50 years, no effort, however small or incremental, must be spared to ensure universal adherence to and compliance with the relevant treaties covering not only nuclear weapons, but also weapons of mass destruction. Our collective commitment must be unequivocal.

In this context, let me add that the Conference on Disarmament continues to play an important role in strengthening and consolidating multilateral principles for disarmament. However, we are disappointed that once again we have failed to see agreement on important and outstanding issues of its agenda, as well as on the big issue of expansion of its membership. On the point of membership, let me say that since nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are issues that affect each and every one of us, my country strongly feels that everyone should be able to play an active role in such multilateral forums.

Throughout the 50-odd years of the Organization's existence, a significant portion of our attention has for good reason focused on weapons of mass destruction. The spectre of nuclear holocaust and the potential annihilating and destructive potential of other weapons of mass destruction evoke great terror in our imagination. Yet, while being ever-vigilant in our efforts to ensure that such nightmarish visions remain only in the realm of the imagination, we cannot close our eyes to the suffering and devastation that is caused by the use of conventional weapons, including light weapons and small arms. The unspeakable atrocities that are being committed every day — even now, as we speak — in the various conflicts across the world cannot but spur us to action.

It has been said that men do not fight because they have arms; they have arms because they deem it necessary to fight. Certainly, it is the root cause of conflict that must be eliminated. However, one cannot reject outright the reality that the availability and accessibility of weapons and arms, including their illicit transfer, precipitates and prolongs conflicts. It is incumbent upon us to redouble our efforts to ensure that the sale and spread of all types of conventional weapons and small arms is brought under tight control.

The urgency is even more apparent when we consider the intricate linkage between the sale and supply of arms and other areas of political, social and economic disruption and destabilization, namely, international crime, drug-trafficking and terrorism. These phenomena are compounded further by the strengthening of international criminal networks through the misuse of information technology. No Government can afford to be complacent,

and we must try to find global solutions to these global problems.

An important feature of international cooperation in disarmament is the means to secure a world free from want, fear and terror. Reducing the demand for weapons is as important as reducing the supply. It is vital that we collectively endeavour to foster a culture of peace, both within and among nations; that we effectively address the complex issues of disarmament and development; and that we continue to support post-conflict peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in war-torn areas.

We agree with the Secretary-General, writing in his annual report on the work of the Organization, that there is an urgent need to seek to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers. Malta therefore supports in principle the convening of a United Nations conference in the near future on all aspects of the illicit arms trade. This would certainly be an important step forward in our efforts to secure a world free from conflict and fear.

Malta also fully supports the initiatives that the Department for Disarmament Affairs is planning to take to curb the proliferation of small arms. At this point, let me say how pleased we are to see the re-establishment of that Department under the able leadership of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has contributed much in fostering greater openness and transparency in military matters. It enhances mutual confidence and trust among nations and promotes progress towards disarmament. Malta supported the creation of the Register from the beginning. We continue to support efforts to further develop the Register in order to make it more effective and to secure the widest possible participation.

Other cooperative measures help promote the culture of peace, both within and beyond national boundaries — such as those envisaged in the resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, the European Union code of conduct on arms exports and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

While on the subject of conventional weapons, I would be remiss not to make special reference to the adoption last year of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. Malta was among the first to sign the Convention, and it is now working on the process of ratification. We join others in saluting its entry into force in March next year. We also welcome the entry into force this coming December of the amended Protocol II, constituting a partial ban on landmines, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The role of the United Nations in demining activities and the general support of Member States in this important area, such as that provided by the European Union, are commendable and worthy of our continued support.

Malta attaches particular importance to achieving progress in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. These are crucial elements in the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of international security. We believe that our objectives and activities can be most effectively implemented if combined within the sphere of activities of specialized regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and other forums. Regional organizations such as the OSCE can and do play an important role in early warning mechanisms, confidence- and security-building measures, preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building. Regional organizations also have a complementary role to play in the broader aspects of security, including the economic, social and humanitarian dimensions and the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

It is therefore encouraging for us to see that the Secretary-General is committed to continuing his efforts to consolidate links with the OSCE and to create a real partnership with a more structured, rational and cost-effective division of labour between regional organizations and the United Nations. This is recognition that regional efforts at confidence-and security-building can only have a broader and positive impact on the wider international playing field.

It is our firm conviction that confidence-building measures can foster peace and security at the global and regional levels when accompanied by cooperative measures in the political, economic, social and other fields. Malta has therefore always been very assiduous in its efforts to promote peace and cooperation in the Mediterranean. The recognition of the need for interlocking and reciprocally reinforcing institutions and mechanisms has encouraged us to promote a wide-ranging cooperative policy for the Mediterranean. As stated by my Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs in his address to the General Assembly last month,

> "Stability in the Mediterranean must rest on multiple initiatives that nurture cooperation through gradual confidence- and security-building measures. This is the crux of our insistence on the need to establish a stability pact for the region. Initiatives such as the addition of a parliamentary dimension to this process of dialogue, p moted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the setting up of a council or forum of Mediterranean States and the eventual creation of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean deserve serious consideration." *(A/53/PV.19, p. 5)*

The Euro-Mediterranean process is an important factor in common efforts to address root causes of tension and conflict while building understanding and trust through mutual cooperation in the political, security, economic, financial, social and cultural fields. Malta has always played an active role in the Euro-Mediterranean process, a role that can only be enhanced through our eventual membership in the European Union.

Our agenda remains, as always, quite a challenging and even daunting one. However, we must be resolute in working towards our common goal of achieving a secure, peaceful and just world. My Government, for its part, remains fully committed to playing its part, not only in this Committee but also in all other related forums.

Mr. Al-Ahmed (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to congratulate the Chairman and the other officers of the First Committee on their election. I would like to convey the confidence of the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that they will use their experience and wisdom to conduct the work of this Committee so as to achieve what all of us in the international community seek in the disarmament field. I would also like to assure them that our delegation will lend its support and cooperation so that this work can be successfully completed.

We are holding our meetings in an environment of intensified international and regional efforts to achieve goals that inspire hope and optimism: to raise international awareness of the need for complete disarmament, including the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The end of the cold war has reduced the danger of the possible use of such weapons. It has also created a new reality in which there is no longer any need for retaining nuclear arsenals or security systems based on competing military alliances and nuclear-deterrence policies.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is following with interest the efforts aimed at the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf. It participated constructively in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was held in New York. It is also supporting the efforts of the League of Arab States, in accordance with the call made at its 101st session, to make that sensitive part of the world a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned about Israel's refusal to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as about its maintaining its nuclear programme outside international control. This represents a grave threat to the security and stability of the region.

While we completely object to the double standards practised by the international community — which exclude Israel from the efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and thus encourage the arms race — we are also concerned about the nuclear tests in South Asia, first by India and then by Pakistan. All of this threatens peace and security in the region.

Although we believe in strengthening the effectiveness of the NPT through activating the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency by making it more international, we also believe there is a need to establish regulations that will help in achieving the required progress in all aspects of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with United Nations resolution 1 (I) of 1946.

Thus, we urge all the countries that have not yet joined the NPT to take the necessary steps to do so. They should also subject their nuclear facilities to international control. All of this will enhance international security and stability.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports transparency in armaments as one of the means of consolidating international peace and security. It also believes that for transparency to succeed, it must follow definite, clear, balanced, universal and non-discriminatory principles — principles that we believe will strengthen national, regional and international security for all countries in accordance with international law.

In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms represents a first attempt by the

international community to deal with transparency on such a scale. Despite the Register's potential value in increasing transparency and thereby building global confidence, along with its value as a first and reliable early warning mechanism, it has encountered a number of problems. The most noticeable problem is that more than half of the United Nations Member States have consistently refrained from submitting data to the Register. This should prompt us to deal effectively with the concerns of these States to increase international participation in the Register.

In this regard, my country reaffirms the response of the members of the League of Arab States to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/312, of 28 August 1997, entitled "United Nations Register of Conventional Arms". That response, issued in accordance with resolution 46/36 L, which established the Register, affirms that an expanded Register including information on advanced conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and high technology with military applications would represent a more balanced, more comprehensive and less discriminatory instrument attracting a larger number of participants.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to the United Nations Charter and to the principles of international legality, which represent a basic foundation of its foreign policy. It is particularly interested in strengthening the role of the United Nations in all aspects of international peace and security and disarmament. Those issues constitute an indivisible requirement for the world to live in peace and stability.

In this regard, I should like to reaffirm the importance of consolidating and strengthening the United Nations in the field of disarmament. This is a collective objective, requiring coordination between the work of the First Committee and that of the Disarmament Commission in order to unify international efforts to achieve complete and total disarmament.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the willingness of my delegation to cooperate with all the members of the Committee and to participate actively in considering all the items before us so as to strengthen our aspirations to establish security and peace in the international community for the well-being of all humankind.

Mr. Hashim (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor in the First Committee at this session, I should like to congratulate Mr. Mernier on his election as Chairman, and I wish him and the other members of the Bureau complete success in the discharge of their mandate.

The purpose of creating the United Nations 50 years ago was to save humanity from the scourge of war in the aftermath of the Second World War and to establish an international order based on justice to ensure the security of humankind. Bearing in mind the necessity for international cooperation in eliminating weapons of mass destruction, Bahrain has ratified several international conventions in this field, including the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Bahrain supports the setting up of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which should also be free from weapons of mass destruction, because we want to live in peace and security in the region. We believe that the position of Israel, which refuses to subscribe to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and rejects the controls of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), refusing to place its installations under IAEA safeguards, impels other countries to develop such weapons and engenders an arms race that imperils peace and security. That is why we call upon the international community to exert pressure on Israel to accede to that Treaty.

Bahrain is a party to the NPT. We believe that it must become universal, without exception. It deserves our respect.

We support international efforts to draft a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT are entitled to legally binding safeguards, which should be set out in a multilateral instrument. Weapons of mass destruction prevent the enjoyment of security by all countries on an equal footing, as provided for in the Charter. Such weapons have definitely become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing countries that do not possess them. That is why my delegation appeals to the Ad Hoc Committee on international terrorism established by resolution 51/210 to elaborate a convention to prohibit nuclear terrorism, and calls for the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Bahrain followed with interest the meetings in Ottawa in 1997 leading to the Convention on the Prohibition of the

Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will be entering into force in March 1999. Landmines threaten the lives of millions of people in the world.

We also support efforts aimed at elaborating a convention against small arms and light weapons, because they are a factor of instability in many parts of the world. We are in favour of international cooperation to limit weapons of mass destruction. That is one of the ongoing objectives of the United Nations, and it is all the more important as we stand at the threshold of the third millennium, hoping to achieve an international order based on the rejection of war and peaceful cooperation among all nations.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations, namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me first join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Mernier and other members of the Bureau on their election. The Chairman has the challenging task of brokering our exchange and action on vital issues affecting international peace and security. We are confident that his skill will bring the work of this important Committee to a successful conclusion. I offer him our full cooperation and support. I must also express the appreciation of the CARICOM delegations to Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana for his able chairmanship of this Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

This year's report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, document A/53/1, records a disturbing increase in regional conflicts and other events which undermine international peace and security. These developments have direct implications for the work of this Committee, for where there is war there is unquenched demand for the weapons of war. Our responsibility is to ensure that through the regimes and arrangements to which we adhere, by our demonstrated commitment to non-proliferation and arms control and through genuine efforts to promote confidence-building through transparency and verification of action, we will ultimately create a safer world for ourselves and for generations to come.

CARICOM States are heartened by the fact that the international community has been giving increased attention to the issue of small arms. In recent years we have witnessed significant growth in both illegal trade and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Estimates are that there are about 100 million such weapons in circulation across the world, and there exists an inestimable capacity for their continued production. The ready availability and ease in accumulation and dissemination of these weapons are important factors in the escalation of regional and internal conflicts and in the undermining of peacekeeping activities.

The Secretary-General's report on Africa, document A/52/871, identifies the proliferation of illegal arms as a major factor hampering the achievement of durable peace in that region, and the report also underscores a need to combat the illicit arms trade in Africa as a matter of urgency.

The threat posed by the increase in the illegal traffic in small arms is particularly troubling to nations of the Caribbean. The dangerous combination of criminal activity involving illicit traffic in drugs and guns has had devastating effects on our small, vulnerable, open societies, undermining the security and stability of our States and the safety of our populations.

The proliferation of small arms therefore plays a part not only in the undermining of regional and international peace and security; it also contributes directly to the erosion of national security and the destabilization of civil society. There can be no doubt that the use and abuse of small arms by far results in the greatest loss of life and incidence of injury on a daily basis worldwide.

Clearly, the time has come for the international community to address this problem urgently, aggressively and comprehensively. We emphasize the fact that there are no national or regional boundaries delimiting illegal traffic in these weapons. We believe that stronger measures should be meted out against illegal exporters from the main areas of manufacture as well as to the importers of illegal small arms. This problem is truly multinational in nature, involving both the arms-producing and arms-purchasing countries. Without a coordinated approach, little can be achieved.

Effective control of small arms therefore demands an approach that goes beyond the traditional instruments of disarmament and arms control. We support the conclusion of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms that what is needed is "a balanced approach of prevention and reduction" involving action at all levels —

the global, the regional and the local. In this the United Nations also has an important role to play. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the issue of small arms (A/53/207), which catalogues important initiatives already being pursued in this area.

In this context, we note with satisfaction the progress made during the past year on the proposed moratorium on the manufacture, import and export of light weapons in West Africa. We look forward to receiving next year from the United Nations group of Experts on Small Arms recommendations on measures which we hope the international community as a whole can consider for implementation.

What is particularly encouraging, too, is the increased dialogue on a study of this pressing issue. We note with much satisfaction, for example, the Oslo meeting addressing an international agenda on small arms held in July of this year, which sought a common understanding among a group of developed and developing countries on the complexities of the problem and the urgency with which these issues should be addressed. We congratulate the Governments of Norway and Canada for their leadership in this initiative, which we hope will be a catalyst for future action by the wider international community.

We welcome also the special information session on small arms held here at United Nations Headquarters in September and offer our continued support for the Mali proposal for a moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light weapons in West Africa.

CARICOM States also attach substantial importance to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted by the Organization of American States in November 1997. We consider that this instrument provides a comprehensive framework for regional cooperative action to control the illegal production of and traffic in small arms. We welcome the Secretary-General's endorsement of the Convention and commend it to the consideration of other regions and the wider international community.

We join the call for the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade and note the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host such a meeting under United Nations auspices in the year 2000.

Another important area in conventional arms control which deserves our continued vigilance is the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the deposit on 16 September of the fortieth instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, adopted in Ottawa last December, as a significant step towards the achievement of our desired goal. We urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention, and we look forward to its entry into force on 1 March 1999.

The lack of progress on disarmament-related issues recorded at the Conference on Disarmament this year demonstrates, in the view of our delegations, insufficient investment of political will. We note in particular the lack of agreement on the initiation of negotiations on a time-bound framework for nuclear disarmament. Also of continuing concern is an evident stagnation in the START process.

Progress in disarmament has at best been disappointing. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan during May of this year are a disturbing indication of stalled non-proliferation initiatives. We welcome the expressed intent of both countries during the recent General Assembly debate to sign the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we note with some satisfaction that more than 140 countries have signed the Treaty. CARICOM delegations consider that this instrument is integral part to the effectiveness of a non-proliferation regime. We therefore urge all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

The lack of progress in the work of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in our view also demonstrates inadequate political will. We call on the nuclear-weapon States in particular to make every effort to strengthen the preparatory process with a view to enhancing the NPT regime. The NPT, with 186 States parties and its current indefinite extension, undoubtedly offers the best hope for achievement of universality in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

For this to be achieved, however, we must first work towards ensuring universality in participation. We therefore encourage those nations which remain outside of the membership of the NPT to consider accession to the Treaty, and we welcome the eight new accessions to the regime since its last review in 1995.

An important aspect of our international disarmament agenda is the ongoing effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate the production and stockpiling of fissile material used to produce nuclear weapons. The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty should be an integral part of our overall non-proliferation strategy. We therefore join the call for the commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

The environmental risk inherent in the movement of nuclear waste is an issue of primary concern to the member States of the Caribbean Community. The threat of contamination during the shipment of radioactive material is very real and has profound and lasting implications for the viability of the fragile marine and island ecosystems that characterize our nation States. The continued use of Caribbean waters as a route for the transshipment of irradiated reactor fuel therefore remains a matter of grave concern to all CARICOM States. We renew our call to the international community to consider the very valid concerns which we have expressed regarding this practice.

CARICOM delegations recognize the important role which nuclear-weapon-free zones can play in enhancing both global and regional security and non-proliferation. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which promotes the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. We call on Member States to recognize and respect the non-proliferation regimes established under the Treaties of Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga.

We further encourage the creation of mechanisms to facilitate cooperation among all these zones, thereby contributing to the strengthening of an international non-proliferation regime. We also support proposals for the creation of similar regimes in those regions which do not yet have them, particularly in the Middle East and in South Asia.

For more than 10 years, since the 1986 International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development, the international community has impassively acknowledged the importance of peace and stability as essential prerequisites for economic and social development and paid lip service to the notion of investing the proceeds diverted from arms proliferation in human development. The disarmament for development initiative has achieved little over the years because insufficient attention has been given to the dividend in peace and stability gained through development.

CARICOM States believe that the time has come for us to inject new life into this initiative. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General and look forward to revitalized efforts in implementing the action programme adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development. We also strongly urge the early convening of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament and call on Member States to demonstrate the political will required to reach agreement on the objectives and agenda of that session.

Finally, CARICOM States underscore the integral role which the United Nations should play in the strengthening of institutional arrangements at the multilateral level. We therefore welcome the reestablishment and reorganization of the Department of Disarmament Affairs and express our hope that these changes will result in more effective mobilization of international action in the pursuit of global disarmament and security.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Allow me at the outset to convey to Mr. Mernier my delegation's warmest congratulations on his election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We are confident that, with his broad experience and skills, he will lead our Committee's work to a fruitful conclusion, to which end my delegation pledges its full support and cooperation.

I should also like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey through him my delegation's deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana, for the excellent way in which he conducted this Committee's work at its previous session.

As we begin the work of the First Committee this year, it is important in our opinion that we draw a picture as to where we stand in the field of arms control and disarmament. In the course of our debate, many of us have described in apocalyptic terms the present overall situation following the developments that have occurred in a certain region of the world. Others, in a more patient tone, have sought to look into the reality as it stood and were determined to find a wise response to it. In the view of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the overall picture is surely not bright. There are nevertheless some areas in which positive developments have taken place, thereby giving some glimmer of hope for a safer place to live in. Let us consider some of these areas.

The United States of America and the Russian Federation, for the first time in the history of their relations, have, under START I, reduced their nuclear arsenals. In this context, we only wish to see those two major nuclear-weapon States proceed to further reductions under START II and, eventually, START III, as soon as possible. The declared intention to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons, as set forth in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is most welcome, but we remind them that deeds alone are what count. One should not simply stop after having gained positive results. Indeed, it is urgent to move on and accomplish the noble task that lies ahead — the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session three years ago was another major event in United Nations history in the field of disarmament. Although we regretted that the adopted Treaty did not specify a time-bound framework for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons at the global level, we were of the view that the adoption of such a Treaty constituted an important milestone that would lead to a gradual achievement of nuclear disarmament. In our opinion, despite its imperfections, the CTBT, if sincerely and strictly implemented, will help prevent the non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring these weapons of mass destruction and, more importantly, the nuclear-weapon States from improving their nuclear stockpiles. That, we believe, is how we can attain the goal of gradual nuclear disarmament. At this year's session, in order to keep the momentum alive, it is important that our Committee reaffirm its unequivocal commitment to the CTBT.

The entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention also constituted a positive event in our common effort to free the world from weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the various steps taken by the States parties and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we wish to underline that every effort should be made in order to pave the way for the effective, full and indiscriminate implementation of the Convention.

Throughout these past years, we have been satisfied to note the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the globe, namely, South-East Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The establishment of such nuclear-weapon-free zones not only has demonstrated the genuine aspirations of the peoples of the regions concerned to be free from the nuclear threat and/or annihilation, but has also become a powerful and irreversible trend that would lead to the gradual building of a nuclear-free world. This trend deserves strong encouragement and support from us all.

Last April, to our satisfaction, an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices was established by the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome this positive development. We are all the more pleased to see that, after four years of delay, the ad hoc committee will finally be able to begin its work, hopefully at the very beginning of the Conference's 1999 session. In our opinion, the Committee, in considering the draft treaty text, should address not only nuclear non-proliferation measures, but also nuclear disarmament measures, as the two concepts are interrelated, complement one another and should go hand in hand.

At this very moment in history, much is being said about the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). At this session some delegations have even gone so far as to say that the very foundations of the NPT could be undermined by certain events. The issue here revolves around our whole perception of the NPT. As we all know very well, the Treaty has two noble objectives: that the non-nuclear-weapon States must not acquire nuclear weapons, and that the nuclear-weapon States have a clear responsibility to embark on serious negotiations towards the reduction of their nuclear arsenals, leading to their ultimate elimination. Since the entry into force of the NPT in 1970, the non-nuclear-weapon States have all along complained that the nuclear-weapon States are not only keeping their arsenals of nuclear weapons in huge numbers, but are also continuing to enhance the destructive power of those weapons. In response, the nuclear-weapon States have not to date advanced convincing arguments to prove the contrary. As a result, to our deep regret, a difficult situation has arisen. We see that the situation now is all confused.

In view of all this, the future of the NPT could, in our opinion, be at stake. We very much fear that confidence in the Treaty could be eroded. As we move closer to the NPT review conference scheduled to be held in the year 2000, it is most urgent that both non-nuclear-weapon States and, in particular, nuclear-weapon States make further efforts strictly and sincerely to fulfil their obligations under the relevant provisions of the Treaty.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is in favour of strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Our delegation has no objection in principle to discussing issues pertaining to the establishment of a verification regime for the Convention. However, any verification regime for the Convention should be considered fully taking into account the security and economic interests of developing countries parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

We share the concern at the deadly consequences of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. The point here is that we must prohibit such indiscriminate use and at the same time recognize the legitimate right of any State to use such weapons in the defence of its national independence and sovereignty. In this regard, we are of the view that, in any arrangements or negotiations to ban landmines, the legitimate national security concerns of States and their legitimate right to use appropriate measures for self-defence, as provided for in the Charter, should be taken into account.

As we examine issues of peace and disarmament, it is important to recognize the role that the United Nations centres for peace and disarmament can play. In fact, they continue to help promote arms control and build confidence and trust among the countries in their respective regions. In that light, our delegation supports the programmes of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, known as the Kathmandu process for disarmament and regional stability. We trust that the United Nations conference on disarmament issues, entitled "Towards a world free from nuclear weapons", to be held in Nagasaki, Japan, in November 1998 will have a positive outcome.

As the Secretary-General said in his remarks at the opening of the Committee's general debate, nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of the agenda of the United Nations and of the world community as a whole. Indeed, the great horrors of the first use ever of nuclear bombs, five decades ago, still remain so vivid in our minds and keep reminding us of the unacceptably huge and destructive nature of these weapons of mass destruction. The international community is therefore duty-bound to do all it can to achieve, within a specified time-frame, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons from the face of our planet.

It is our view that, pending the elimination of all nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States should agree on a legally binding international instrument to provide unconditional assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and also on a legally binding international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Such conditions are essential for all humankind, so that it can feel safe and be protected from a nuclear holocaust.

International arms control and disarmament is intimately linked with international peace and security. It is also a long and complex process. In order to facilitate it, States must build confidence and trust among themselves, through dialogue and cooperation. They should also base their relations on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, which constitute a sound political basis for international peace and security. It is in that spirit that our delegation will continue to cooperate with all other countries and to contribute positively to the promotion of the international disarmament process, so as to ensure peace, stability and cooperation in our world of the new millennium.

The Chairman took the Chair.

Mr. Ople (Philippines): Let me first of all congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as you begin to lead us and to guide our work in the First Committee. I pledge to you and to the entire Bureau my delegation's full support and cooperation as we proceed with our work at a time when more is demanded of the Committee than ever before.

Allow me to express our deep appreciation as well to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe, who led us at the last session with efficiency, professionalism, insight and good humour.

Almost a decade has passed since the cold war ended, and we are today at the doorstep of a new millennium. We have achieved much as individual nations and Members of the United Nations and of this Committee, yet the promise of a new era of enduring peace and progress remains largely unrealized. At this session our Committee will meet and conduct its work against a backdrop of complex and profound international events and transformations, events that have brought welcome changes but that have been eclipsed by the problems and difficulties that have forced us to call into question some of the traditional and familiar ways in which we have been addressing the challenges that face us.

Our Committee is called upon to move the cause of disarmament forward so that we can establish a global order where peace prevails and where nations live in harmony, are secure and their sovereignty is respected; where growth and development are rights and not privileges; a world of justice and equality where the individual and his or her rights are respected; a world that protects the earth and that grows and develops only in a manner that will sustain the natural environment.

The clear, big victor at the end of the cold war was the free market. For most of our lives the assault upon the very idea, concept and practice of the free market animated the world's ideological divisions. The market was anathema to an ideology that many then embraced but have now abandoned. Today that ideology is no longer the leading threat to the free market. The success of market-driven globalization is proving to be its own nemesis: today it seems that the free market's worst enemy is itself. Today a third of the world's economies are in recession, with currencies and stock markets plunging in value — from Asia, where the problems started more than a year ago, to Russia and Latin America. During this period — the hard times of the free market and the most critical stage of globalization's growth — the Philippines renews its commitment to the free market and a socially responsible market. The Philippines continues to believe in liberalized trade and refuses to give in to the temptation of reverting to closed markets.

As we approach the new millennium in this globalized era, we continue to be burdened by old animosities and long-standing differences. The end of the cold war, the advances in communications and the prosperity brought by globalization, while contributing to peace among nations, have not served to end bitter rivalries and ethnic and religious strife.

In our region of South-East Asia, elections have been completed in Cambodia. We are hopeful that a stable civilian Government will be able to provide for the needs of the people that elected it.

We do not want an arms race on the Korean peninsula, nor do we want the progress that has been achieved so far in finding a diplomatic solution there to be derailed.

In the South China Sea the peace and stability that has allowed the free movement of goods, which has in turn fuelled progress in my region, continues to prevail. While there are conflicting claims in the South China Sea, we have not allowed this to stand in the way of restoring much stronger economic and political cooperation.

Elsewhere things are not so promising. In the Middle East the peace process remains stalled, with both sides unable to agree on how much West Bank land should be turned over. We are all hopeful that the tragedy in Kosovo will now end. Regional peace talks have not been very successful in halting the Congo's civil war.

The future of most progress in this globalized world, and indeed the very existence of mankind itself, is put in deadly jeopardy by the continued maintenance by some countries of nuclear arsenals, ready-to-fire weapons of mass destruction and the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. The fear and uncertainty these weapons generate are enough to shatter the fragile confidence with which economic and investment risks are taken in our economically integrated world. Fear should have no place in our quest for progress.

The nuclear-weapon States continue to place all of our hard work in peril with their nuclear weapons and doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons continue to be the single most serious threat to the very existence of mankind. The continued existence of large nuclear arsenals and the network of States that adhere to the perceived protection of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence make the elimination of these weapons more difficult. Ironically, this task has been made even more difficult when two nations from my region, and fellow members of the Non-Aligned Movement, made a decision to succumb to the lure of the nuclear siren. The global effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons consequently suffered a serious setback. The international community should continue to engage both countries and make it clear that nuclear weapons are not acceptable for them or for anyone else.

We must be ready to seek all means and try all measures to address this issue of nuclear weapons. We must not rest until every single nuclear weapon has been eliminated. Whether in the chambers of the International Court of Justice, in the Statute of the International Criminal Court, in the review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere, region by region and hemisphere by hemisphere we must continue to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is in this spirit that we welcome the initiative of the eight-nation group that issued the joint declaration on creating a nuclear-free world for the First Committee to negotiate a comprehensive and realistic draft resolution of

the same title. We hope that that draft resolution, supported by countries across regional lines, will serve as the death-blow for nuclear weapons.

We also support the efforts of Myanmar, which has pioneered a comprehensive approach in its draft resolution on nuclear disarmament.

The Philippines also supports Malaysia's initiative of building on the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* through the draft resolution it has put before our Committee.

We also pledge our continued support to Indonesia, which chairs the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on Disarmament.

In our region, we continue our efforts to engage the nuclear-weapon States to convince them to adhere to the protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

In the area of landmines, we have been able to use the same developments in technology and communications that have fuelled the globalized world to mobilize global action. The same technology-driven developments sparked the coordinated action of States and non-State actors when it came to dealing with the issue of landmines. Never in the history of disarmament has so much action been taken in so short a time. Within the span of a few years, a global agreement — one of the few that are truly disarmament agreements — has been achieved.

We achieved a major victory with the Ottawa Convention, which establishes a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The Philippines welcomes the fortieth ratification of the Convention and looks forward to its entry into force. Although a lot of work remains, we are confident that the first meeting of States parties will prove to be successful in establishing the mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

In this regard, the Philippines would like to express its gratitude for the offers to provide the resources without which the first meeting of States parties could not become a reality. These offers come from the same States that have from the very beginning provided not only political leadership, but also material support to rid the world of landmines.

Not only should we ensure the effective implementation of the treaty, but we should also continue to locate and clear each and every minefield. Once again, we have to acknowledge the indispensable role played by non-governmental organizations in mine clearance and victim rehabilitation.

In what can only be the dark side of globalization, the very same technology and advances that have spurred the virtual seamlessness and globalization of the world have, tragically, also fostered the illicit trade in small arms. The easy movement of capital and finances, as well as advances in the efficient movement of goods across seas, oceans and borders, has ensured the continued and unfettered illicit traffic and movement of small arms. We must continue to seek ways to address the issue of the illicit transfer and circulation of small arms. The Secretary-General estimated that 90 per cent of those killed or wounded by light military weapons are civilians and that 80 per cent of those were women and children. We need to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers. There have been several informal meetings on this issue, and the Philippines will continue to support any and all efforts to this end.

Terrorists and international criminal syndicates have benefited from globalization too. Taking advantage of modern means of transport and communications, terrorists and international criminal syndicates have established sophisticated means and networks through which they manage their people and their resources. It will take all our concerted efforts and our new understanding of the globalized world in order to eradicate this scourge.

We must make the world smaller for terrorists. We must continue to strengthen multilateral and bilateral cooperation against terrorism. No effort should be spared in our fight against international criminal syndicates, particularly those that deal in drugs and weapons.

Eradicate them we will. We shall destroy these wanton criminals not only where they dwell or dare to go, but also by addressing the roots that give them cause or motivation. We must do all we can to keep illicit weapons out of the hands of terrorists by eliminating these weapons once and for all.

In this regard, the Philippines supports the work being conducted in the Conference on Disarmament on the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

Needless to say, we hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon take on the actual task of nuclear disarmament. To aid in that task, the Philippines urges the Conference on Disarmament to decide on the expansion of its membership and to admit the present applicants.

Globalization indeed holds the promise for a new era of peace and prosperity. We must focus our efforts on the specific disarmament tasks before us in order to realize this promise. We must engender a new openness and trust not only within our Organization on the issue of disarmament, but also in dealing with each other as nations. We must, in appropriate circumstances, be more open to hearing the views of others and offering our own, even on issues deemed highly controversial. We must welcome, rather than have misgivings about, sharing our thoughts and ideas.

Globalization in a way makes it very difficult for this not to happen. For today, ideas and thoughts, actions and initiatives, move across borders in ways never before imagined. Ideas about freedom, democracy and the protection of human rights move freely and are impossible to suppress.

In the area of disarmament, armed with the very same tools that created the globalized world, coupled with our own determined resolve, we must therefore make sure that those who resist change and adhere to the immutability of doctrines best left as tragic memories of a bipolar world must find it harder not to be open to the overwhelming desire of the entire world to be free of weapons of mass destruction.

The Millennium Assembly is upon us. We must bring to this critical event proposals and initiatives that will ensure that the next thousand years will be free of weapons of mass destruction and that national conventional arsenals will be filled only to levels reasonably necessary for self-defence. There is no better way to prepare for the Millennium Assembly, in terms of disarmament, than to convene as soon as possible the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

This openness or willingness to engage others in a flexible manner should never be taken as a sign of weakness. Rather than weakness, a new openness would reflect a boldness with which we should renew the promise of a new era.

Openness has been the key to today's globalized world. Openness need not be feared. Boldness need not be the ill keeper of promises.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to associate myself with those who have preceded me in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee. We hope that under your leadership the Committee will achieve concrete and practical results in its pursuit of complete and total disarmament.

The Final Document (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, remains the cornerstone of disarmament policy for the international community. The Member States unanimously and clearly defined the priorities of disarmament in a clear manner in paragraph 45 and paragraph 47 of the Final Document:

> "Priorities in disarmament negotiations shall be: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons; conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and reduction of armed forces."

> "Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is essential to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avert the danger of war involving nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons."

The extremely destructive character of nuclear weapons should stimulate constant and unstinting efforts to achieve the goal of the complete and total elimination of such weapons. The effects of the first use of nuclear weapons, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, more than half a century ago, are still vivid in our minds. Whole generations in Japan, as well as the conscience of humanity, are still suffering from that experience.

The claim that such weapons are not for use but for deterrence is untenable. The very existence of these weapons poses a serious risk to international peace and security. It is regrettable that the efforts of the international community in this respect have yet to achieve important results and have not led to practical steps towards the elimination of these weapons, despite the great number of General Assembly resolutions, as well as the calls of the international community and the recent judgement of the International Court of Justice.

In order to achieve of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons we must take practical steps in which regional and

international efforts would go hand in hand. Specifically, the nuclear-weapon States should implement their commitments in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and there should be an agreed time-frame for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Until the goal is achieved the nuclear-weapon States should give legally binding assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use such weapons against them. The universality of the NPT must be achieved through the accession to the Treaty of all States without exception. We must increase the effectiveness of the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the only international multilateral body able to bring about legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament, especially with regard to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Middle East is currently experiencing a serious situation of military imbalance. Israel is continuing with its policy of expansion, occupying Palestinian territory as well as the territory of two Arab States. For this expansionist policy, it depends on a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — as well as conventional missiles. It is the only State in the area that has not yet acceded to the NPT. It persists in its refusal to implement Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls on Israel by name to place all of its nuclear installations under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

This situation jeopardizes international and regional peace and security. It encourages and intensifies the arms race in the area. It also exposes the double standard of the policy pursued by the United States of America with regard to the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. In this respect, the United States goes to excessive lengths in interpreting the requirements of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), especially section C, which applies specifically to Iraq.

It disregards the fact that paragraph 14 of section C of that resolution, which was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter, refers to the fact that the disarmament measures to be taken by Iraq in the field of disarmament represent steps towards the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. That paragraph has been disregarded since the first review of the implementation of resolution 687 (1991); so far the IAEA and the Special Commission have taken no operative measures in that respect because of pressures exerted by the United States of America. In order for the Security Council to be truthful, and to carefully and comprehensively implement the requirements of resolution 687 (1991), it must consider the implementation of that particular paragraph.

Some delegations have referred to the implementation by Iraq of its commitments in accordance with resolution 687 (1991). In this respect, we wish to reaffirm the following facts. Iraq has been cooperating with the Special Commission, as well as with the IAEA, for seven and an half years. It has implemented the requirements of resolution 687 (1991), including all disarmament requirements in the three areas of chemical weapons, biological weapons and missiles. Some believe that certain questions remain unanswered in the area of biological weapons. We wish to reaffirm that this is the result of a misunderstanding caused by the unprofessional approach of the Special Commission in confusing the main elements with the marginal elements and the requirements of disarmament with other requirements.

We have asked the Special Commission more than once — most recently during the meeting between Mr. Tariq Aziz and Mr. Butler, which took place on 3 August 1998 — to present any evidence that Iraq has kept certain weapons prohibited by resolution 687 (1991) or to prove that there are relevant weapons factories, equipment or devices that have not been destroyed. Mr. Butler has not yet answered that question. As for the nuclear aspect, paragraph 23 of the most recent IAEA semi-annual report to the Council, contained in document S/1998/927, states,

> "Should Iraq recommence full cooperation with IAEA, there would be no impediment to the full implementation of the Agency's OMV plan and, as part of that plan, the further investigation of the few remaining questions and concerns and any other aspect of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme arising out of new information coming to the Agency's attention."

However, for political reasons the United States of America is still opposed to relinquishing continuous control.

As we underline the high priority we attach to the disarmament in the area of nuclear weapons, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction, we do not want to disparage the efforts being made by the international community to control conventional weapons, reduce military budgets or encourage countries exporting such weapons, foremost among which is the United States of America, from taking action to reduce their export of such weapons.

We wish to reaffirm in this respect the substantive link between disarmament and development. For example, the proliferation of civil wars and local, regional and international conflicts, especially when one Power has unilaterally taken on the role of leading the world, cannot be attributed to small arms. The roots of such conflicts are found in the colonial legacy, underdevelopment, the incessant marginalization of the economies of developing countries and the widening gap between North and South. The combination of all these factors results in multitudes of unemployed who respond to any call for violence. If we were to adopt sustainable development as a goal, divert the disarmament dividend towards development and provide employment opportunities for all in an international environment characterized by economic and political security, we could help all those unemployed persons turn their swords into ploughshares.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): On behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, may I at the outset extend to you, Mr. Chairman, our congratulations on your election. We are confident that under your able chairmanship this Committee will be able to carry out its responsibilities most efficiently. May I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and wish them all every success, and also assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation. In particular, it gives me great pleasure to see my colleague and dear friend Motaz Zahran assuming the rapporteurship of this Committee.

The First Committee meets this year against the backdrop of both remarkable achievements and serious challenges in the field of international security and disarmament. On the remarkable achievements side of the balance sheet, we find such positive developments as the signature by 130 countries of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, with the target number of ratifications required for its entry into force drawing near; the recent decision by the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; the continued work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Preparatory Committee on setting up a verification system for the CTBT; the continued work of the Biological Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group aiming at establishing a verification and compliance regime for the biological and toxin weapons Convention, as well as the recent convening of an informal ministerial meeting devoted to strengthening the Convention; and, finally, the adoption of, and accession by many States to, a Model Protocol Additional to existing safeguards agreements between Member States and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

On the other side of the balance sheet, we regrettably find such negative developments and situations as the nuclear tests in South Asia last May; the ongoing reluctance by the only State in the Middle East with considerable nuclear-weapon capabilities — Israel — to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all of its nuclear installations and facilities under the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency; the continued reluctance by the nuclear-weapon States to meet their obligations in compliance with article VI of the NPT by pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament; the failure to reach agreement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV); and the failure so far to take practical steps towards broadening the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to encompass military holdings and procurement through national production as well as stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

My country, Jordan, has always been committed to the cause of international peace and security. We have over the years advocated a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Middle East, a settlement that could lead to a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region. We realize, as do many others within and outside the region, that for a durable peace to be achieved, positive steps towards confidence-building between the parties have to be taken, on top of such steps as freeing the region of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Since we met here last year, Jordan has adhered to the Chemical Weapons Convention, ratified the CTBT, signed the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines and signed with the IAEA an Additional Protocol for safeguards. By so doing, Jordan has completed its adherence to all international instruments providing for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as the prohibition of other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

It is noteworthy in this context that the General Assembly has over the last two decades called upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, particularly the only State in the region possessing considerable nuclear-weapon capabilities, to adhere without delay to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty and to place all of its nuclear facilities under the full-scope safeguards

of the IAEA. All States in the Middle East except Israel are now parties to the NPT.

Since 1974, the General Assembly has been calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, and that resolution has since 1980 gained more momentum through its adoption by consensus. Furthermore, in paragraph 5 of its resolution on the Middle East, the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference called upon all States in the region to

> "take practical steps in appropriate forums aimed at making progress towards, *inter alia*, the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems, and to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of this objective" *(NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), p. 14)*.

Paragraph 6 of that same resolution called upon all States parties to the NPT, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the achievement of that goal. Unfortunately, more than three years after the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, no indication of such efforts has so far been felt in the region.

Here, we cannot but reiterate our conviction, as we have done time and again, that the chances for a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East look too gloomy without confidence-building between the parties involved. Confidence, however, can never be attainable with the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

I now turn to other issues on our agenda at this session. As the turn of the century draws near, the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is capturing more attention. Jordan has actively participated in the two sessions of the Preparatory Committee in New York and Geneva. We regret, however, the fact that the second session in Geneva did not allow for tangible results on substantive issues and that the Committee was therefore not able to submit recommendations to the next session. We hope that the third session next year will have better chances for success and we urge all participants in that session to work diligently to strengthen the review process and to come out with consensus recommendations.

As far as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is concerned, we are encouraged by the fact that, so far, 150 States have signed the Treaty and 21 have deposited instruments of ratification. We join other Member States which have called on all countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, particularly those 44 States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to come into force.

We are also encouraged by the fact that, finally, serious negotiations will soon start aiming at the conclusion of a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Jordan has on many occasion reiterated the importance of a fissile material cut-off treaty as a significant step towards the achievement of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

The decision of the Conference on Disarmament to set up an Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances is certainly an important step towards assuring non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In order to be effective, such assurances should take the form of international, legally binding instruments. They should definitely go beyond the limited scope of the assurances so far given, whether by Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) or by any other unilateral or multilateral statements or declarations.

Jordan has been a staunch supporter of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We regard the Register as an indispensable mechanism for achieving transparency in armaments, which leads to confidence-building, especially in such conflict-prone regions as the Middle East. However, we believe that the Register may not be effective unless its scope is enlarged to include military holdings and procurement through national production, as well as weapons of mass destruction. We therefore regret the fact that the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms failed at its last session to deal with this problem. We hope that the upcoming session of the Panel in the year 2000 will be able to straighten out this situation.

As I outlined earlier, Jordan recently signed the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This step reaffirmed our commitment to helping to eliminate that most excessively injurious and inhumane weapon, which has indiscriminate effects, especially on children and other innocent civilians. Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, in her capacity as

patron of the Landmine Survivors Network, is leading and contributing to the worldwide campaign to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines. We hope that all Member States, particularly those that are financially and technically capable, will join efforts for both demining and providing assistance for landmine victims.

Weapons of mass destruction and landmines are not the only challenges to the survival of mankind. Small arms also pose a serious threat to all nations. We welcome recent efforts to highlight this problem with a view to reaching consensus on guidelines for a comprehensive approach to combating illicit trafficking in conventional weapons. We do support all positive steps towards convening an international conference on the illicit arms trade.

Finally, on the question of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), we share the disappointment expressed in this room by many delegations over the failure of the Disarmament Commission, during its 1998 session, to achieve consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV. We believe that it has become imperative that we agree at the current General Assembly session on a specific date for SSOD IV, as well as on its objectives and agenda.

Mr. Al-Besbas (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, as well as the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Our Committee meets this year in circumstances that are discouraging with regard to disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament and policies related thereto. We were all witness to the recent nuclear explosions in South Asia that have raised international concern and we have all heard the accusations made in this regard. Why did these explosions take place? For several years, through the First Committee, we have met regularly in our efforts to attain the noble objectives of freeing the world from weapons of mass destruction, of strengthening international peace and security, and of building mutual confidence among the peoples of the world. Through our material observations, we have noted that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is continuing and that we have been unable to end it. There must therefore be some flaw in our methods of work or in our priorities that has prevented us from achieving general and global progress in nuclear disarmament.

Many countries share our view that the principal flaw is our ongoing focus on nuclear non-proliferation policies to the detriment of the most important issue: nuclear disarmament. This is not a new issue and we, along with others, have insisted that we concentrate on nuclear disarmament. We wish to reiterate in this regard that, if we do not take this matter into serious account in our work, our efforts will fail and our problems persist.

The answer to our question about the reasons for the recent nuclear explosions in South Asia should make us face some important facts that are not to be ignored. We must take account of those facts in our debates and as we adopt our draft resolutions. Those explosions may also reflect a refusal to accept the prevailing nuclear imbalance and the fact that there are two categories of States: nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States; States that are allowed to continue developing nuclear weapons and States that are forbidden to do so. This state of affairs must change. In line with the principles of nuclear disarmament, the First Committee has been working in that direction for a number of years, and it is not proper for certain countries to refuse to cooperate.

Further evidence of the indifference of nuclear-weapon States to their commitments under article VI of the NPT is to be found in the lack of effective security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, which face a nuclear threat — in spite of the 1995 decision to extend the Treaty indefinitely. Still more evidence of this indifference and of the chaos and double standards that prevail in the nuclear situation lies in the possession of offensive nuclear weapons by some States not officially classified as nuclear-weapon States by the terms of the non-proliferation Treaty. While some States are pursued day and night, with force, with threats and with accusations, other States have the freedom to do as they like.

The nuclear explosions in Asia have demonstrated that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence still prevails, despite the end of the cold war and despite the provisions of the NPT and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The inventor of that doctrine bears the blame for its existence; it has not abandoned it, even though it would have us believe the opposite. These nuclear arsenals continue to exist and to be developed and transferred.

All of this bears out our conviction that the ideal, and most efficient, solution is to adopt a comprehensive strategy based on the principle of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We must not simply be content with the non-proliferation Treaty, for that Treaty is inadequate. It has been suggested that the nuclear explosions in South Asia do not indicate any lack of effectiveness in the NPT

and in the CTBT, since the countries that carried out those tests are not parties to those Treaties. But that is inaccurate and does not reflect the facts. Those countries have refused in principle to accede to the Treaties because of their weaknesses and shortcomings. The Treaties address horizontal nuclear proliferation but add nothing when it comes to nuclear disarmament or the reduction of stockpiles.

Brazil's accession to the NPT pleases us, because it reduces the number of countries remaining outside the Treaty regime and reduces the nuclear threat facing the world. Nonetheless, we aspire to universality for the Treaty; this goal was adopted in the 1995 decision on the review and extension of the Treaty. Universality cannot be achieved so long as there are nuclear Powers outside the Treaty; here I would recall Israel's nuclear capabilities, which are not subject to any international safeguards and which pose a genuine threat to the Middle East. The implications of that threat are unforeseeable. We cannot ignore Israel's continued refusal to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards for its nuclear installations and the indifference of many Western States with respect to the whole question of Israeli nuclear weapons. The continued handling of the issue in this way, without attaching the necessary importance to it, reflects a double standard, which is precisely what we in the First Committee must avoid.

For several years, Arab countries have been working towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That initiative is aimed at curbing all weapons of mass destruction. The major obstacle is Israel's refusal to participate in such a zone on the pretext of national security issues. That pretext has been used more than once to evade a commitment to create the zone and to avoid accession to the non-proliferation Treaty; it cannot and should not be accepted, because it harks back to the days of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which we must go beyond. That pretext will force the States of the region to seek adequate means of protecting their own national security, which will lead to continued tension and conflict in the region.

The Conference on Disarmament has created two ad hoc committees: on a fissile materials cut-off treaty and on a convention on security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. This is a positive development. We hope that it will be possible to avoid gaps like those that are to be found in past conventions and adopt a convention that will not simply ban the production of fissile materials but will call for the elimination of stockpiles of such materials. Such a convention would contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and to the elimination of stockpiles of nuclear weapons. We hope that the conference will be able to create an effective system providing real safeguards for non-nuclear States against any nuclear threat against them.

The Disarmament Commission was not able at its last session to reach a collective agreement regarding the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We regret this because we are convinced of the need to hold such a session, especially under the current circumstances, where the disarmament has suffered certain setbacks. We hope that the Disarmament Commission will soon be able to reach an agreement on the details for that session, because we feel that this would contribute to the establishment of a future strategy for disarmament in the world. We hope that we will be able to decide on the holding of the session in a time-frame in keeping with the present circumstances.

The failure of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is disappointing. That failure was not brought about by any important factors, but rather by the fact that one delegation adopted an obstinate and illogical attitude, choosing to oppose the will of 96 States parties to the Treaty. That attitude was based on its rejection of the mention of nuclear weapons possessed by Israel, which is already mentioned in a resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Finally, I would like to refer to the question of landmines. Libya is one of the countries that suffers tremendously from the consequences of wars. According to United Nations estimates, there are more than 10 million landmines on Libyan territory, creating much difficulty and suffering for us. We are still suffering in human and financial terms.

Although the Ottawa Convention represents a humane step towards the elimination of landmines from the world, it still has many shortcomings. We would have liked the Convention to be more global, especially in providing assistance in demining. Demining is difficult for a country such as mine to do on its own because of the great amount of technical and material resources it requires, including in cartographic cooperation for locating mines.

We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will examine this issue and take measures concerning the elimination of landmines throughout the world, bearing in

mind the assistance that is necessary and the need for the countries responsible for those mines to extend assistance and maps to the countries affected.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I regret to be obliged to exercise my right of reply in response to what was said in the morning meeting today by Ambassador Robbie Sabel of Israel. Why do I regret this? Because I have known Ambassador Sabel for many years, and he has been part of the negotiations between Egypt and Israel for even longer and knows better than what was said in this morning's meeting.

Ambassador Sabel, after citing long security arguments, trying to justify why Israel did not join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and did not subject its nuclear facilities to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, chose to note with unhappiness that Egypt is one of the Arab States that has not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — as if it were the right of Israel alone to keep ambiguous nuclear capabilities and policies to protect its security while all Arab countries, and maybe Egypt in particular, should forgo their security concerns and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). This is an unacceptable concept in our view and will not lead anywhere.

Egypt has repeatedly stressed that it is ready, able and willing to ratify the CWC and the BWC in a package that must include Israel's ratification of the NPT and subject all its nuclear facilities to full-scope IAEA safeguards. This was clearly demonstrated by the initiative to declare the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, launched by President Hosni Mubarak in 1991. This was stressed again in 1998 by President Mubarak, with no positive sign on the part of Israel.

At the same time, if Israel is really concerned about the Chemical Weapons Convention, it should also clear up some of the ambiguities surrounding its activities in the field of chemical weapons. For instance, it has to justify the use of chemical agents in the failed assassination attempt against Mr. Khaled Meshaal conducted in Amman by agents of the Mossad using forged Canadian passports. It also has to provide information and an explanation as to why the El Al flight that crashed in the Netherlands a few years ago was carrying chemical agents en route to Israel. It also has to clarify the fate of the lost 30 tons of cargo that was aboard that plane.

Israel must realize that security does not mean the security of Israel alone; it means the security of all States in the Middle East region and is an interrelated and integrated issue that cannot be dealt with in bits and pieces.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): In one of the statements this morning, reference was made to the military capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate the position commonly shared by all States in the Middle East that the sole threat to the security and stability of the Middle East stems from Israel's nuclear capabilities and its access to advanced missile technology. This position not only signifies a political notion; rather, it asserts a deep and serious concern based on facts and realities. Of course, Iran, like others in the region, cannot remain idle against the threat posed to the region by Israeli mass-destruction capabilities.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to all conventions on weapons of mass destruction, without exception, and considers its missile technology a legitimate conventional defensive means. Iran's deterrent missile technology serves solely for self-defence and, as was clearly pointed out by the Iranian Foreign Ministry statement, this technology does not constitute a threat to any country and is not set up for first use.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Earlier this morning the Israeli delegation mentioned the so-called crisis. As for the crisis, we think it is on the side of Israel. There is a real crisis in the Middle East peace process because of Israel's continued defiance of the principle of land for peace. Continued occupation of Arab lands creates a crisis and constitutes a real threat to peace in the region. Israel should not deflect this crisis of its own onto other countries.

My delegation urges Israel to pull its troops out of all occupied Arab lands without condition, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. My delegation advises Israel not to follow the United States blindly in addressing the Korean peninsula.

In earlier remarks the United States claimed that my country's satellite launch was provocative. This is nonsense. Our satellite launch was not provocative; rather, it was for the peaceful utilization of the universe, to which

every nation has a legitimate right. However, the continued accusations of the United States regarding our satellite launch only reveal the attempts of the United States to camouflage its aggressive policy in the Korean peninsula and its dislike of developing countries making new scientific and technological advances.

My delegation urges the United States to stop making accusations against my country and to stop using our satellite launch for its own political purposes in an attempt to stifle my country. I would like the international community to understand correctly the motives that lie behind some countries' unjust accusations regarding our satellite launch.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): I am taking the floor because this morning the Committee was subjected to some more of the lies that the Ethiopian delegation has been spreading about Eritrea during this session of the General Assembly. Indeed, the Ethiopian delegation seems to have refined lying into a diplomatic art form. Luckily for Eritrea, the world is seeing through these lies, which are being peddled in a vain attempt to camouflage the annexionist and expansionist policies of the Government of Ethiopia and its gross violations of the rights of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin — violations that the world community has already soundly condemned.

The Ethiopian representative accuses the Government of Eritrea of irresponsible and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, it is the Government of Ethiopia that should stand accused of this matter, and there are third-party reports verifying this. This baseless charge could have been dismissed as a sign of the irresponsibility of a bankrupt diplomacy, if it had not been for the seriousness of the matter.

The Ethiopian representative also accused Eritrea of committing aggression. This charge has already been refuted quite easily at this session of the General Assembly, as well as in other forums. However, let me refer to General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) of 1974 so that the identity of the real aggressor in this conflict can be confirmed. Article 3 of the annex to the resolution defines aggression as, *inter alia*:

> "The invasion or attack by the armed forces of a State of the territory of another State ...;
>
> "Bombardment by the armed forces of a State against the territory of another State ...;
>
> "The blockade of the ports ... of a State".

Third parties will verify that it was Ethiopia that crossed into Eritrean territory in July 1997 and again on 5 June 1998, after the Ethiopian Prime Minister declared war on 4 June 1998. It was Ethiopia that announced to the world that it had blockaded the Eritrean sea coast. It was Ethiopia that bombarded Asmara International Airport. It is Ethiopia that is still threatening to use force again. These are truths that no amount of diplomatic subterfuge and lying can camouflage.

Allow me to quote only one example from third-party reports on the matter. In a recent article in *Combat and Survival*, volume X, issue 7, of October 1998, Paul Harris writes as follows:

> "The bloody border conflict between these two neighbouring States in the Horn of Africa started on May 6 this year. Three Lieutenant Colonels of the EDF (Eritrean Defence Force), together with four soldiers, travelled to the Badme border area to investigate reports that Ethiopian administrators and police had moved into an area contested between the two countries. They found Ethiopian militias there, were taken aside and shot.
>
> "After almost two weeks of light skirmishing, full-scale war erupted. On June 5 at 14.13 hours three Ethiopian MIG-23 jets attacked Asmara airport. Fifty minutes later, Eritrean jets bombed the MIGs' military base in Ethiopia at Mekele.
>
> "Unknown to the Eritrean Air Force, the Ethiopians had admitted large numbers of civilians to the military airport to welcome back their 'heroic' pilots. Around 40 civilians died in the air attack. Next day, the Ethiopians attacked Asmara again with three MIG-23s, but accurate anti-aircraft fire brought down two of the attacking aircraft.
>
> "Within 24 hours full-scale war had broken out on the borders. The following day, the Ethiopians attacked hundreds of miles away to the east with a drive towards the Eritrean Red Sea port of Assab. Although border incursions were alleged, it seems more likely that the Ethiopians had decided to attempt to secure a much needed port on the Red Sea. In the event, the Ethiopian regular army and militias of the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) were beaten back on all three fronts."

Nothing could be clearer than that. The Eritrean delegation therefore wishes not only to flatly reject such mendacity but to invite all members of the Committee to ascertain which side of the border has been mined and which of the two Governments has in fact committed aggression by crossing international borders. Here and now, I also request the Ethiopian representative to extend a similar invitation, if he is convinced of the truthfulness of his statements. There is an Amharic proverb which informs us that the whip cries as it lashes. That is the case with Ethiopia.

Mr. Sabel (Israel): Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz and I have spent many hours trying — not always successfully — to improve the situation in the Middle East, and, although we do not always reach agreement, I am a great admirer of both his ability and his good humour. I hope we will be able to continue thus.

I believe that his words reflect the need for peace to exist between States in the area, which would enable them to negotiate the issues we have been talking about — because they have to be negotiated between States at peace. In the same way that Jordan and the Palestinians followed Egyptian leadership and negotiated agreements, I sincerely hope and believe that other States in the area will follow suit, and that when we are at peace we will be able to negotiate the very difficult and dangerous issues that the Egyptian Ambassador referred to. They need to be negotiated; but the point we are making is that they need to be negotiated between States that recognize each other and are at peace with each other.

With reference to another speaker, I should like to say that I listened carefully with a certain amount of incredulity to Iraqi calls for "complete and total disarmament". I listened in particular to the calls and recommendations as to how Israel should behave. I hope that delegations, including my Egyptian colleague, appreciate why, in the realm of arms control, Israel treats Iraqi recommendations as to how we should behave in the same manner as porcupines make love: very, very carefully.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): Given the late hour, I will try to be very brief. Last Friday, during the seventh meeting of this Committee, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea touched extensively on the issue of peace and security on the Korean peninsula in his general statement. Although, in the light of the critical importance we attach to the issue, we basically understand his concerns, we found his statement to be misleading and somewhat distorted. Therefore, for the sake of the record of this Committee, my delegation would like to make the following points.

First, we are quite disappointed to note that the statements of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea failed to adequately address one of the most pressing questions on the Korean Peninsula: disarmament in the area of weapons of mass destruction. While the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did assert that there was a need to remove the cold-war structure of confrontation and to establish durable peace on the Korean peninsula, it did not listen to the international community's call for a Korean peninsula free from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's intention that we work together for the peace and security of the Korean peninsula is really genuine, it should take concrete actions to eliminate from the region the lingering horror of weapons of mass destruction. It should join international efforts to strengthen the global regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by fully cooperating for the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the safeguards agreement, as well as by adhering expeditiously to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In this connection, my delegation wishes to reiterate once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is under full legal obligation as a party to the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement, despite all the allegations put forward during the statement made last Thursday. This has been reaffirmed by the international community on several occasions — I do not need read out the entire list of the relevant resolutions and statements. I believe that one of the most important documents in this regard is the Security Council presidential statement of 4 November 1994, S/PRST/1994/64, which was adopted by the Council after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea signed the Agreed Framework, and which states in its fifth paragraph,

> "The Security takes note of the decision of the DPRK in the Agreed Framework to remain a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

It then refers to the actions that were supposed to be taken by North Korea.

The IAEA General Conference also adopted relevant resolutions on 25 September 1998, 3 October 1997, 20 September 1996 and 22 September 1995 — and the list

goes on. I will finish this point by saying that any argument against such a truce will not be acceptable to this delegation or to the international community.

Secondly, as for the issue of Korean unification, to which the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea referred at length in his statement last Friday, my delegation shares the belief that unification is one of the most important goals for all Koreans and that division and confrontation should not be perpetuated. However, where we differ is on how to achieve this long-cherished goal of unification. Unfortunately, the North claims to stand for unification based on its own unilateral unification formula, while rejecting meaningful dialogue and exchanges aimed at achieving genuine reconciliation with the South. That approach is akin to putting the cart before the horse. How could two entities that have walked totally different paths for almost half a century come together and realize unification in a day, without a reconciliation process? Such a process is quintessential to meaningful progress towards eventual unification.

It is a harsh reality that mistrust still lingers in the relations between the two Koreas, and even determined efforts to nurture peaceful coexistence as an interim arrangement pending reunification are being hindered due to the lack of genuine political will.

The fact is that there can be no quantum leap towards the peaceful reunification of divided nations. Reunification will take place gradually rather than suddenly and will come through concrete actions based on practical and realistic approaches — not through words of propaganda.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would kindly ask the representative of the Republic of Korea to shorten his statement.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I have just a few paragraphs left, Mr. Chairman. I will try my best to comply with your request.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I wish to remind the representative of the Republic of Korea that the rules of the General Assembly restrict rights of reply to a 10-minute period on the first occasion and to five minutes on the second. I would be grateful if he would take this into account.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

Both Koreas have already entered into a binding accord on Inter-Korean reconciliation, cooperation and non-aggression in 1992 that presented a detailed road map towards national reconciliation and reunification. What is most important and what is urgently needed now is to faithfully implement this basic instrument through meaningful dialogue and cooperation, thus laying a firm foundation for eventual reunification.

Lastly, with regard to the issue of building a durable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula, my delegation believes that the ongoing process of four-party talks will effectively provide a pragmatic path towards the establishment of a new peace regime that would replace the current armistice regime.

As is the case with the South-North dialogue, my Government attaches great importance to the process of four-party talks, also meant to be mutually complementary for enduring peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. In this regard, my Government considers the holding of the third round of the four-party talks in Geneva this week to be a momentous occasion. We earnestly hope that these talks can achieve substantial progress.

To conclude, my delegations wishes to reaffirm the commitment of my Government actively to pursue our engagement policy, the "sunshine policy", to improve inter-Korean relations through dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Nega (Ethiopia): We have just listened to the statement by the representative of Eritrea, which should not come as a surprise to anyone who is familiar with the behaviour and actions of the Government of Eritrea, because the policy of the Government of Eritrea has consistently been to try to confuse and hoodwink the international community.

This morning in our statement we mentioned two specific and concrete points with reference to Eritrea, although the list should have been longer. One was that the Eritrea aggression of 12 May 1998 against Ethiopia represents a serious challenge to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

Secondly, we said that the Eritrean regime is extensively and indiscriminately using anti-personnel landmines, targeting civilians in this war of aggression against Ethiopia. We also pointed out that this action by the Eritrean Government constitutes a grave breach of the norms of international humanitarian law and undermines

ongoing regional and international efforts to ban and eliminate anti-personnel landmines.

However, as I said earlier, the list of illegal and irresponsible actions carried out by the Government of Eritrea is long, so I will mention just one more. The Government of Eritrea, in its war of aggression against Ethiopia, unleashed on 5 June 1998, in broad daylight, an aerial attack on an elementary school using cluster and napalm bombs, in which 55 innocent schoolchildren were slaughtered mercilessly and 146 others wounded. We have concrete evidence of these facts, which were covered by the international media. The representative of Eritrea here in this Committee cannot hide this truth.

How did Eritrea respond to this barbaric act? Statements were made in Asmara, at the highest political level, to justify this cold-blooded murder of innocent schoolchildren. They said that war has no rules, but this Committee says that war does have rules. We are all striving to eliminate the causes and the modalities of wars. Ethiopia has been and remains part of this international endeavour even though we are confronted with this challenge from our neighbour.

In spite of the representative of Ethiopia's denials, baseless counter-accusations and bizarre attempts to present Ethiopia, the victim of their aggression, as an aggressor, Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia and its irresponsible actions and behaviour are no secret to anyone, let alone this body — one of the main Committees of the General Assembly responsible for international security and disarmament affairs.

The entire world knows these facts. The Eritrean authorities themselves know it in spite of their repeated attempts to confuse and hoodwink the international community. There have been a number of major initiatives and proposals by mutual friends as well as by the Organization of African Unity and the Security Council on the crisis between the two countries.

First, the proposal by the United States and Rwandan facilitators, among other things, called on Eritrea to withdraw from the Ethiopian territory of Badme and its environs. That document, which I have here with me, was issued as an official document of the Security Council on 10 June 1998 under the symbol S/1998/496. I am sure that all representatives are aware of it.

Secondly, the thirty-fourth Assembly of the OAU Heads of State and Government adopted a decision endorsing the aforementioned proposal by the United States and Rwandan facilitators and again called upon Eritrea and Ethiopia to accept and implement the proposal. Ethiopia accepted and was ready to implement that proposal. Eritrea rejected both the initiative of the facilitators and the OAU decision.

Thirdly, the Security Council adopted resolution 1177 (1998), strongly supporting the OAU decision. Again, Eritrea prevaricated.

Most recently, the OAU ministerial committee dealing with the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea also came to two important conclusions that we hoped would put to rest this whole bizarre situation. The first of the two conclusions is the following: "Badme and its environs were administered by Ethiopia before May 12, 1998". Badme town is still occupied by Eritrea as a result of its aggression, which its representative was denying a while ago. The second conclusion was that "what happened in Badme between 6 and 12 May 1998 constitutes a fundamental element of the crisis" between the two countries. The fundamental element of the crisis was the aggression of Eritrea unleashed against Ethiopia. And yet, here today, in front of all of us, the representative of Eritrea again mentioned a non-existent third-party verification, whose origins we do not know.

I see, Sir, that you are looking at your watch. I shall finish very soon. There is concrete evidence and facts that testify beyond a reasonable doubt that Eritrea is the aggressor. There is no question about it. Let them acknowledge it. Let them withdraw and this matter will be settled. That is what we said, that is what we were going to say and that is what the international community is telling them. We do not need to try to divert attention by making baseless accusations.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I do not wish to engage in polemics with the representative of an entity that arose through aggression and expansion. However, I wish to confirm once again my statement of this afternoon before this Committee. The statement made by the representative to whom I refer is false, null and void and untenable. It was intended to raise a smoke screen over his position on disarmament in general.

The Chairman: I now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. I remind them that their statements are limited to five minutes, according to the rules.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to place on record that my delegation reserves the right to reply at a later date.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): I wish only to point out three or four facts.

On the question of the air attack on Asmara International Airport, it was the representative of Ethiopia's own Prime Minister, in an interview with Radio Ethiopia in July and quoted by the BBC the next day, who admitted to attacking first as a preemptive measure.

We are being accused of trying to confuse and confound people. If we invite third-party observation for verification on the spot, and the Ethiopians refuse to do so, members can draw their own conclusions as to who is obstructing verification.

As to the attack on Mekele airport, despite the distortions of the representative of Ethiopia, the Eritrean people expressed sorrow publicly about the civilian casualties and extended condolences to the bereaved families, without taking responsibility.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is still seized of the matter and everybody knows it — at least, all the African representatives here know it. The OAU mission was to report its recommendations this month, and this has been postponed until mid-November. If the OAU has decided on the matter, how is it then possible that the OAU is still seized of it?

Whatever the Ethiopian representative may say, we have not crossed international borders. We have not invaded Ethiopia. They have yet to produce a map or to describe which territory has been invaded and occupied by us. We have presented all the maps necessary for evidence.

Mr. Nega (Ethiopia): The question is not a question of maps. Aggression cannot be conducted on a map. The representative of Eritrea brought to our attention the resolution of the General Assembly on the definition of aggression. It does not mention any map. Anyway, maps will come, of course, after the Eritrean aggression is undone — after they withdraw from Ethiopian territory.

A number of points have been made here by the representative of Eritrea. I am glad that he made those statements. He said that the Eritrean people expressed sorrow. Yes, we expect the Eritrean people to express sorrow for what their Government did. But their Government did not express any sorrow. At the highest political level, they said that war does not have rules. Period. Is that the sorrow of the Government?

We have again heard that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is seized with the matter. That is exactly what I said. The OAU is seized with the matter; the OAU has adopted a resolution at the highest level, issued as Security Council document S/1998/494. I do not want to tax the Committee's time reading it, but it is very clear, as I mentioned. The OAU has a clear position on this.

On third-party verification, we are invited and this representative is invited to accept the generous offer of third-party verification. A third party has already verified that Eritrea is in Ethiopia's territory. I cite that document. What other third parties? Professors from certain universities — are they third parties? We have the OAU as an independent third party.

Thus, I think things are very clear here as to who is the aggressor and who is the aggressee, who has the truth and who does not.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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